

STATE OF THE UNION.

SPEECH OF HON. JOHN A. GILMER,
OF NORTH CAROLINA,*Delivered in the House of Representatives, January 26, 1861.*

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. GILMER said:

Mr. SPEAKER: The storm that now rages in the South threatened before I left my home. It has increased, and still is increasing. It is near at hand, and is all around us. It has been my hope that some action of the two Houses of Congress would, ere this, have allayed this threatening tempest. I regret that it has not been done. I do not think, I trust, that it is not too late for something to be done by this Congress by which this Government may yet be preserved, and peace and harmony restored to the greatest nation and the greatest people on this earth. I must confess I feel discouraged by the fact that our northern friends have, up to this hour, made no demonstration. Whether they intend to do so or not, I am not assured; but appearances indicate a cold, icy, stoical, indifference to this raging storm in the southern States. A final effort, a desperate struggle, is now being made in all the southern States to consummate that which South Carolina now avows she has had at heart for the last thirty or forty years. When I was a boy, in that gallant State the doctrine of nullification was preached. It was said to be a peaceful remedy. It was said to be the only constitutional remedy by which differences between a State and the General Government, in relation to power, could be safely settled. But when that heresy was crushed out during the administration of General Jackson, the next resort was to secession. In order to give that some plausibility, it was said to be most peaceful in its character. Nullification never could have had many friends—secession never could have had many friends, were it not that their advocates gave the most solemn assurances that they were constitutional Union men, and excelled all others in attachment to the Constitution and the Union; and that the direction which they led was the better for the preservation of both. These pills were made acceptable with the most seductive assurances of good designs and peaceful purposes.

I pass, sir, over many points of history in relation to this matter, which go to show that this conspiring for disunion has been at work for many years, to come down to a day within the last twelve months. When the Democratic party permitted itself to be disrupted by the nullifiers and the seceders at Charleston and Baltimore, and our nullifying and seceding friends rallied under a nomination of Union men, they held up that nomination of Union candidates to the southern people as a reason why they were not for disrupting this Government, in case Lincoln was elected. They insisted vociferously that they had made Union nominations; that they had put at the head of their ticket men who were Union men, as showing they had no design of disrupting the Government, in case they were defeated and Lincoln was elected. When they were accused of looking to disunion in case of defeat, they uniformly, in the South—almost without exception in the border southern States—denied it most manfully. What is the result? The men who regulated and controlled that disruption of the Democratic party; the men who enlisted under the Breckinridge ticket; the men who have maintained nullification as being peaceful in its character—who have advocated secession as a peaceful remedy; where are they? Doing all they can, everywhere, to destroy the Union.

Mr. BURNETT. Will the gentleman permit me to interrupt him?

Mr. GILMER. I decline to yield. What is said now? What is the course pursued by them now? To give the country time for reflection? To give the country time to consider? Are the people allowed to consider what they shall do? When

Georgia was calling her convention, when Alabama was calling her convention, when Mississippi was calling her convention, what did we see? We found telegram after telegram going from this place; not for peace, not for reason, not for reflection, but still further to inflame the southern mind; still further to fire the southern heart; still further to run into madness; into inconsiderate action, the whole southern people. North Carolina and Virginia are now calling conventions; and what is the course pursued by men professing to want to preserve this Union? I will only call attention to what was published in yesterday's Globe. Here it is:

"A dispatch from Richmond says: 'Ten Virginia Congressmen have sent out an address to the people of Virginia, giving a review of the congressional proceedings in reference to the great question of the day, and the probable action of Congress, saying that it is in vain to hope for any measures of conciliation or adjustment from Congress which the people of the South could accept. They also say that they are satisfied that the Republican party designs by civil war alone to coerce the southern States under the pretext of enforcing the laws, unless it shall become speedily apparent that the seceding States are so numerous, determined, and united, as to make such an attempt hopeless. The address concludes by expressing the solemn conviction that prompt and decided action by the people of Virginia, in convention, will afford the surest means, under the providence of God, in averting the impending civil war, and preserving a hope of reconstructing a Union already dissolved.'"

Here are two ideas, particularly dangerous in their character, prominent in this address. The first is, that Virginia's only safety is in leaving this Union. And the second is equally fallacious, equally dangerous; and it is, that that is the only way to *reconstruct* this Government. I notice also the following in the North Carolina Standard, a Democratic paper, but with a Union standard, referring to a letter sent from here by a Senator from North Carolina in the other House:

"Among other things, Mr. CLINGMAN charges that the 'hesitation or division' in the South, and the 'delay in the State' are encouraging the Black Republicans; that the Black Republicans only want an opportunity to 'compel the South to submit to their dominations, to the extent even of abolishing slavery, should civil war afford them a tolerable pretext.'"

Why, Mr. Speaker, this idea of a reconstruction of the Union is only a part and parcel of the fruitful expedients by which the popular mind is to be lulled, until the people, deceived by it, are drifted into the terrible consequences of the disruption of this Government. What, sir; get the fifteen slave States of this Union separated from the eighteen free States as the proper mode to be pursued to procure a reconstruction of this Government! There is a purpose and a design in all this. You meet the plain and honest-hearted Democrat, or an old Whig either, of North Carolina, or Virginia, or Kentucky, or Missouri, and tell him that the ultimate design and purpose of the movement is to sever finally and forever these slave States from the free, and break up this Union, and he would shudder at the idea, as the men who voted for Breckinridge would have shuddered had they known the truth—had they been told that, on the failure of that ticket, its friends intended to dissolve the Union. The true intention or purpose is not made known to them. Should the honest farmers, mechanics, and merchants of the South be told the truth, that the object is the final disruption of the Government, they would shudder at the idea. When you throw out a decoy duck, and tell them this deception, this syren song, that this is only a movement of the southern States to procure a reconstruction of this Government, I submit, with great deference, that you deceive them. Reconstruction! You might as well tell me, after you had taken a delicate watch, and put it under the ponderous blows of a forge hammer, that you only did it that you might reconstruct, with perfection, its complex machinery. I have no hope that they will ever come to the work of reconstruction. But if they should, I fear they will fail, and "I should not, I confess, be much surprised if it were to turn out that their first step had been to break the mainspring." I honor Virginia and North Carolina, and all the southern States that have not seceded; and I desire that they shall understand what is really covered up in this cry of a readjustment of the Government.

I would say to my northern friends, to the members of the Republican party, that you have it in your power, and that too, I conceive, without any material sacrifice of any principle valuable to you or any one else, to crush this thing out in one hour. You have the power, and you ought to quiet the minds of all reasonable men in the slave

States. You have it—and I say it with great respect—you have it in your power to crush out the enemies of this great and glorious Government. Why, sirs, do you think these ultra men insist on what they call protection, because it is of any value to them? Whenever you say to them, take it as you want it, then you hand over to them what will be to them their political winding-sheet. It is not because it is a thing which is really valuable to the South that they desire protection, nor is it because it would be any injury to the North if you grant it. They demand it because they think you will refuse it; and by your refusal, they hope the South will be inflamed to the extent of breaking up this Government—the *very thing* the leaders desire.

Let me ask you, northern gentlemen—I beg pardon when I address you as northern men, but you are the men to whom I want to appeal—let me ask you one question. Suppose the Congress of the United States were to pass a law that no Governor of a Territory, that no member of a Territorial Legislature, that no man of any prominence in the Government, should give a vote, make a speech, or utter a word against the right of a slaveholder to settle and remain with his slaves in any Territory belonging to this Government, north or south; do you think it would make a solitary slave State more than otherwise would naturally be, provided the North had an equal chance to emigrate and settle in those Territories? Would it make one more slave? There is not a man in this House who can put his hand upon his breast and say that he believes that it would make one slave State more or less, or one free State more or less, or one slave more or less. And if you want effectually to break up this disunion movement, all you have to do is to rise in your night in this Congress, and say, "Gentlemen of the South, just fix it so that there shall be equal rights of immigration and settlement in the Territories given to all the States; and when the people have the power to form a State constitution, which, as things now stand, will be a very short time, they shall be permitted to come in with a free or a slave constitution, as they may desire." Do this, and you could do nothing that would disappoint the disunionists more, or which would so speedily prove their downfall. There would be joy and gladness among all the industrious masses; but weeping, mourning, and wailing, and a speedy end to the ambitious schemes of disunion politicians. Why, gentlemen of the North, let me remind you of the Kansas-Lecompton troubles, frauds, and swindles. The manner in which they were settled was not of your device. As you know, a few conservatives of the South had to struggle for a long time to prevail upon some of you to vote with us upon the Crittenden amendment, because it said that the people of Kansas, a Territory north of the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$, might or might not have slavery, just as they pleased. Many of you were committed against there being any slave State north of the parallel of $36^{\circ} 30'$. We prevailed on you to join us in making a settlement. At last you came up and voted with a few conservative men of the South, to settle the question by allowing the people of Kansas to take the matter into their own hands, and say whether there should be slavery there or not. You did that; and I ask you what was the result? The result in Kansas shows that there is no harm to you in that course. On that principle you triumphed. On that principle mainly, for adopting it in that case, has your strength grown up in your section; and I believe there are not now, in any section of this Union, many who have courage enough to denounce the course then taken to settle that difficulty. You triumphed then. But, as I think, on a correct, fair principle, all you ought to desire is the maintenance of that principle, whether it runs out for you or against you. You have it in your power to maintain it. You have elected the President and Vice President. You have secured the appointing power. Then I ask you to consider it again. I ask you to go home and think about it. If you will say to these fire-eaters of the South, "Give us free emigration and free settlement, and then a fair vote on the formation of a State constitution," you will see a set of men die off quicker than you ever saw a set of men die off before. You will send them home to hide their heads, mourning and disappointed. I ask you to do it; I implore you, for the sake of the peace, the quiet, and the happiness of the greatest people on the face of the earth. Do it, and to many millions of anxious and aching hearts it will give ease. Do it, and you will save the greatest people on the face of the earth from utter bankruptcy and ruin, and you will put an end to the race of a set of men who are acting, as I verily believe, like madmen. You will lose nothing for your section or your party. You will gain immeasurably to both, and to the whole country.

But you say there was no such issue as this in the canvass; that you did not come here under any instructions upon such an issue as this. Nor did you when Lecompton came here. Your election took place before that swindle was perpetrated and presented to you. You acted then without instructions. You acted under the advice of

southern conservative men, and you got clear of that great wrong. You acted under the solemn sanction of your oaths, and met that crisis. Do so now, and your constituents will approve and rejoice in your course. I tell you, if you will only be advised by me, who lives in the heart of the South—a man in whom I believe you have some confidence as a fair-minded man—just now be advised by me, and your country will say that you acted like noble patriots in a crisis which was forced upon you. You will have the praises of all your countrymen, and thousands and millions of unborn souls will rise up to say, “Blessed be the men who stood in this crisis and saved this great country.” Why, sirs, you tell me Congress can make slavery go, or not go, wherever it pleases. Just as well might you tell me that any law that Congress might pass would stop the waters of the Mississippi from flowing into the Gulf of Mexico, as to tell me that Congress could legislate slavery out of or into any Territory. It cannot be done.

More than that, gentlemen, when is this congressional legislation to be invoked? When will it be asked for? Only when the people of a Territory indicate their hostility to slavery, and invade the right. So long as the people get along without slavery, or peacefully with it, such legislation is not asked for. It is only when the people are determined not to have it, that Congress could be asked to interfere. How long will such legislation be effective? The people, as in the case of Kansas, will soon decide. Congressional action would not make a slave more or a slave less. I ask the members of this House to consider. Let by-gones and past differences pass. Let us come up to the great work of the peace, happiness, and prosperity of our great and beloved country.

I say to gentlemen here from the North, consider well Mr. CRITTENDEN's proposition; not because it is so much better than some others as to become an *ultimatum*, or that it should have less favor with the North by reason of this individual opinion candidly expressed for myself, but because it seems to be acceptable to our southern friends. Disconnect it, if you choose, from territory hereafter to be acquired. Give us that at least. Think of it till Monday. If you will not give us the Crittenden proposition, give us the border-States proposition. If not that, then give us the proposition of the committee of thirty-three, modified, if you please, to conform in substance and in effect to the two first-named propositions; but let us all go together, every man who loves his country and this Union, for something that will certainly give peace to our distracted and distressed countrymen of all sections.

Sir, I am free to say that I have given the most careful examination to these various propositions; and I am cheered to find them all verging so nearly to the same ends. They do not differ so widely as to justify Union men in falling out by the way, and failing to agree. The effects expected by the adoption of any one of them ought not to be lost by the adoption of either of the others. In many particulars, and for reasons which I have not time now to assign, I think well of the report of the committee of thirty-three. Under all the circumstances, I incline to the opinion that their proposition to adjust the territorial question should be well considered, because it shows a feeling on the part of northern gentlemen that I had not expected. The objection to the proposition, so far as it relates to the Territories, cannot consist in the proposition itself; but it must be somewhere else than in what I can see on its face. It must be because it does not come from what gentlemen consider a desirable source. I read it as it is written. I give it, I think, a fair and impartial construction. And if I do, it means much, and goes a long way to adjust and settle all territorial quarrels as to the Territories we now have, or may hereafter have.

I prefer Mr. CRITTENDEN's proposition so far as it relates to slavery in the District of Columbia, and in the forts, arsenals, and dock-yards. But northern gentlemen say, that if you submit all these little questions of constitutional amendment to the people, and some of them are voted down, you will be worse off than you were before, and that these are all small and unimportant questions compared with the question of slavery in the States. The question as to the interference with slavery in these places has only had importance in the South as settling a principle which they feared would lead to an interference with slavery in the States. Whether slavery shall be employed in these places or not, is a question small compared with the questions of slavery in the States; but it becomes an important one in the South, because if that power were exercised by Congress, our people take it for granted that the next step would be to attack slavery in the States. But if, as gentlemen propose, they will give us a congressional pledge upon these subjects, and then give us, as they propose, a perpetual guarantee against the interference of Congress with slavery in the States—the great area or field where it exists—for all time to come, by a constitutional amendment, never to be

altered or disturbed except by the consent of all the States of this Union. If you will do this, then I conceive the apprehensions of my people will, in a great degree, be removed as to these diminutive localities. When the people of the free States have given them a guarantee for the perpetual enjoyment of their institutions in these glorious fifteen States, having nine hundred and fifty thousand square miles of territory, the best rivers in the world, the most valuable productions of the earth, and the most desirable climate, and also give them a reasonable chance in the Territories wherever climate, soil, and productions will invite their settlement, then I would address my people, and say that they should stay in the Union. With this constitutional, perpetual guarantee as to slavery in the States, and a congressional pledge as to the District, arsenals, and dock-yards, I should consider all inducements to interfere with slavery in these very small localities removed.

Gentlemen say that this is altogether unnecessary; that you never intend to interfere with slavery in the States; and that you have no power now to abolish it in the States. I have repeatedly heard that said here. I do not gainsay it. But I tell you, gentlemen from the North, that the item of a letter which I have read to you to-day, sent by the Senator to the capital of my State, is only a specimen of what is preached all over the South in every neighborhood; and the southern people do, whether justly or not, honestly believe that the Republican party—a great and powerful party at the North—do intend to interfere with slavery where it exists in the States; and if the North will come up in this solemn manner, and put this perpetual guarantee in the Constitution against the power of Congress, then the men who distract the South with this idea will be contradicted by you in the most positive and indubitable manner for all time to come. And here let me make a remark to northern gentlemen, in all kindness, and without meaning any offense to any one. You say you have elected your President constitutionally. I admit it. You express wonder and surprise that the South should be alarmed at this. Now, let me reason with you. The presentation of the converse of a proposition sometimes puts the question itself in a different light. Suppose the position of the two sections of the Union was reversed; suppose the slave States were eighteen, and the free States fifteen; suppose the slave States had a majority in this House, and a majority in the Senate, and a majority in the electoral college; suppose the slave States were to hold a convention, and appoint the place of meeting as far South as they could, say at Mobile; that there should be no delegates in that convention from the free States; that they should nominate two candidates, one from Florida and the other from Texas, and should wind up their proceedings by the adoption of a resolution intimating that it is in the power of Congress, as well as the duty of Congress, to provide that no more free States shall be admitted into the Union, and should elect their candidates nominated by the slave States alone; suppose all these things were to happen, and then speeches, assurances, and telegrams, should be freely circulated through your country, that the South intended to make all the States slaveholding States: I submit to you, my northern friends, would you not be very much warmed up against that southern movement, and begin to feel that you were but small folks in this Government? Would you not feel like looking out for yourselves, at least to the extent of asking for some guarantee? I throw out this idea by way of some excuse or extenuation of these ravings and threatenings to the peace and quiet of this country.

It is my honest opinion—and in that I agree with the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MILLSON]—that our present territorial question is substantially settled, and that it is rather an excuse for agitation. I incline to the opinion that in the future, as heretofore, soil, climate, and productions would settle this question of slavery in the Territories, if peace and quiet were restored. After all that has been said and done, Congress has never made a free State out of any Territory that nature intended for a slave State, and has never made a slave State out of territory where free labor could be profitably employed. You cannot by your Wilnot proviso, prevent the establishment of slavery in any territory where the people can use compulsory labor better and with more profit than any other, and where they can cultivate rice, tobacco, cotton, indigo, and sugar, better than anything else. When such a territory has got a population large enough for the establishment of a government, and you tender them a territorial government, with the Wilnot proviso in it, they will throw it back in your faces; and when they have sufficient population for a State, they will organize a government of their own, republican in form, and apply for admission, and, according to your own principle, you will be bound to admit them. I am only showing you what a very little thing it is that we have got this country so much by the ears about, and if we

get in a proper humor, how easy it would be for sensible gentlemen to get together and settle it.

Why, gentlemen, pray what is this territorial question? It is one that has only assumed its importance within a short time, because ultra partisans have magnified and misrepresented it for the purpose of inflaming the public mind North and South. In this they have succeeded to a most fearful and alarming extent. This is the true complaint with which we are afflicted. This is the disease which has brought us to the verge of the grave.

Why, sir, I find in the newspapers of the day that our northern friends say we have got the Dred Scott decision; that that decision makes slavery the normal condition of the Territories; and that the same principle there established, if carried out, would carry slavery into the free States. Who can wonder that that idea, when presented to northern audiences, should excite them against the South, and set them railing against us? And so, when a Democrat gets up before a southern audience and tells them that the great sectional Republican party has got the power, and has determined to set all the slaves free, who can wonder that they become excited? Who can wonder that the man who owns slaves looks up his old rifle, and that he and his sons are for fighting when thus assured? Partisans and demagogues have wrought all this mischief. The Supreme Court, as I understand it, has not decided that the normal condition of the Territory is either slave or free. No, sir. I used to think that the Missouri compromise was constitutional. Looking to the men who passed it, and the long acquiescence of the country and of all parties under it, I so concluded. I thought that partners in land could divide their land as legally and as constitutionally as they can sell it or jointly occupy it.

I can illustrate, in a few words, how I understand this decision, and the extent to which it has gone. Pardon me if I do so by example. Suppose two old farmers, Mr. North and Mr. South, have bought, and each owns, a large tract of land under a Government which permits slavery. Mr. North says he does not want to have slaves on his plantation; he will do without them, and makes a family law that all slaves brought over into his lands shall be free, if they come by the consent of the owner. The common Government says this homestead law you may make. But Mr. South owns slaves, and says that he will and does make his family law, making it legal to command the obedience and service of his slaves. This right the Government aforesaid, common to them both, recognizes. These old gentlemen, after a while, conclude to buy, for the joint benefit of themselves and their families, a large body of new woodland adjoining or near to their said farm and families, and take a common deed to the land, join in the payment of the purchase-money, and the deed is made to them and their heirs. All this being completed, in the course of a few weeks Mr. North goes, with his sons and apprentices, oxen and carts, out into this newly purchased land to cut timber, and Mr. South sends his sons and slaves, with horses and wagons, to do the same. When these parties meet on these newly purchased lands, and a quarrel begins, Mr. North addresses the sons of Mr. South, and says that, although the land is common to both families, Mr. South had no right to send his slaves into this new purchase; and in consequence of this, and his (Mr. North's) homestead law, the slaves are free. No, sir, reply the sons, these slaves, by law common to us both, belonged to our father on the old place. We have a joint right and a joint possession to this land with you. We have not left our possession. We are as much at home with these slaves and these horses, as you are with your oxen and apprentices. Mr. North replies, if you want your negroes to work on this land, you must set them free, or I will set them free. The sons of Mr. South say, if you do, we will do as much harm to you. So here arises the question.

The Supreme Court decides that neither of these parties have gone from home; they are tenants in common; and the same rights of property that each had at and in their first homes, they retain when they meet on the new purchase, the condition of which, after the said joint purchase, must be mixed, and must assimilate itself to the condition, rights, and interests of its joint owners. But suppose an honest, impartial neighbor should come up while the quarrel progressed between the parties, and they would agree to leave the matter in dispute to him: he would not likely decide that the negroes were free; he would more likely advise them to divide their new lands as nearly equal between them as they could, and each stay with his own persons and things on his own side. But if told the court common to both parties had decided that this cannot be done constitutionally, the neighbor would then likely advise the parties to make friends, get on friendly and peaceably with their persons and things, until the members

of the family marry, and settle new farms or plantations on these newly purchased lands, and then let these new families determine each for itself about these slaves, just as Mr. North and Mr. South originally did for themselves and their families. The question then comes to this: can *we* agree? Is it possible that the sons of American fathers cannot agree in this trifling matter? If not, then we have lost the spirit of our fathers. What did they do? When they framed the Constitution, nearly all the States owned slaves; some did not. They recognized and generously provided for the rights of all in these then States as to slavery and every other matter. They provided in their common organic law that if a slave ran away from his master into a free State, he should be returned. More than that, they agreed, by way of compromise, and to form a union with slave States, to let the African slave trade be kept open for twenty-one years. That is what they did. When North Carolina granted to you Tennessee, it was put expressly in the bond that slavery should not be abolished by Congress in that Territory. That is what our fathers did. What, pray you, would they do if they were here in our places to-day? Why, they would settle this question immediately. They would not go to dinner before they had settled it. They never would have broken up this Union rather than do what I request of you to do; never! When the country comes to understand this, and looks back upon what our fathers did, this Congress will be disgraced for not having settled this question satisfactorily, and that, too, speedily. Strip it of all the misrepresentations and exaggerations which have been so improperly crowded around it to create sectional jealousy and hatred, and it becomes one so simple and plain, that were the plain, honest masses here that we assume to represent, they would settle it before the going down of another sun.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the propositions of the committee of thirty-three. I am not disposed to look behind their action to see what this member or that member of the committee may have said. The country will make up its judgment on the report itself. What do they recommend? To let the Dred Scott decision alone. They say in silence to the South, you have got that Dred Scott decision in your favor; it gives you your slaves and your right to hold them in all the Territories North and South; but we have got the power to secure free settlements and fair decisions in the Territories, and we will take care of the northern territory ourselves. We leave you the southern territory under circumstances which will enable you to establish slavery there, if you ever could do it under any circumstances. We leave the Dred Scott decision untouched, uncontradicted, and without criticism, by making no reference to it in the compromise. Take your southern territory, under the compromise of 1850, and under the Dred Scott decision, and with the protection and the right to sue for your slaves, which it declares, and do just what you please with it; and we will take the territory north of the Missouri line just in the same way; we ask no prohibition anywhere in any territory. You cannot make that north of 36° 30' slave territory; and therefore we care nothing for the Dred Scott decision. But do you take the southern territory, with the Dred Scott decision; take it now, whilst the *status* of slavery is upon it, fixed by territorial law, and make a slave State of it if you can. We ask no prohibition of slavery north of the line. We trust to climate, soil, and productions. If any of your negroes come over into our territory, the few that come, or are brought, may remain until the people of the Territory, in forming a State constitution, shall otherwise determine. If I am not mistaken, and I think I cannot be, in my construction there is no other on its face. I think this proposition may be safely accepted by the South. It not only applies to the territory that we now have, but it applies also to what we ever may have. I would have southern gentlemen think of it.

But it is said that there are men in the North who make war upon the Dred Scott decision. I ask, is this the first decision of the Supreme Court that was ever denounced by a political party? Our Democratic friends talk now much about standing by the decisions of the Supreme Court. I think I noticed that at Charleston a little resolution was offered committing the Democratic party to be bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court on all constitutional questions; but it did not get many votes. It comes with ill grace, I respectfully submit, from the Democratic party, to be preaching about standing up to the Dred Scott decision, when you cannot to-day get them to pledge themselves that the Supreme Court, even the present court, is to be the arbiter on all questions arising under the Constitution. They never have done so. They denounced the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of the United States Bank; and although they had General Jackson in the Presidency, other Presidents of the same faith, and had the control of almost every State government, they never tried to amend the Constitution in that respect, or to take away the effect of that decision; never! The Re-

publican party very improperly follow a bad example which was set for them ; but, I imagine, with no better success. Experience, under the decision, will not require its reversal. I tell you it will never be done. I tell you, gentlemen, that, in my opinion, the more that is understood by gentlemen of the North and South, the less inclined will they be to disturb it. It was well said by the gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. MILLSON,]—it was a decision, mark you, connected with the Kansas trouble—that gave to the North the kernel, and to the South the hull ; and that is about the whole of it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have presented these considerations, hoping thereby to get us in proper frame of mind and disposition to work for the peace of this country, because I desire to do my duty, and my whole duty, while I am in the Union ; and if I am forced to go out of it, I may be also enabled to do my duty then. I tell gentlemen that if, in spite of all the efforts of wise and good men, the State from which I come decides to dissolve her connection with this Government, my destinies are, and will be, with her. I know that when that event occurs peace cannot long continue. A war, a terrible war, will ensue. Whenever the people of the North and South have once appealed to the God of battles, for which I look with most fearful apprehension, a civil war will follow that will end only in the destruction of all the great interests of all sections of the country. Whenever that event comes, I know my duty ; and whether I have the nerve to be there myself or not, I know that such will be my duty, and that it will also be my duty to devote to the service my means, myself, and my children. Whenever that struggle comes, you will find, North and South, that the men who have sought most to preserve the Union, who have been the last to give it up, will be the first men to be found in the rank and file on both sides of the bloody contest, their means most liberally and freely be devoted to helping and maintaining the great, terrific, and bloody struggle, and they will enter it on either side for victory or death ; and if they fail in their efforts for the first, they will be found with their back to the field, and their feet to the foe.

I want gentlemen North and South to mark my words : when these things come, when this bloody strife ensues, as it certainly will unless this spirit of disunion can be checked ; when, mark you, this country shall be laid waste ; when all our channels and communications of trade shall be broken up ; when the shipping in our ports shall be destroyed ; when our institutions of learning and religion shall wither away or be torn down ; when your cities shall be given up for plunder and for slaughter ; when your sons and my sons, your neighbors and my neighbors, shall be carried from this bloody field of strife ; and our mothers, our sisters, our wives and our daughters, shall assemble around us, and, with weeping eyes and aching hearts, say : “ Could not you have done something, could not you have said something, that would have averted this dreadful calamity ? ” I want to feel in my conscience and in my soul that I have done my duty. [Suppressed applause.] I want you, fellow-men of the North, to be able to say that, upon a mere abstraction, that upon a question of no practical importance, you have not held out and refused to yield for the sake of giving peace to the country ? I ask you, again, if you cannot give up this mere abstraction ? For, with all due respect, I can never envy the feelings of the man, North or South, who, when that day of butchery and destruction shall come, will feel in his heart that he stood out on a mere point of etiquette ; that if he had yielded a matter of no practical importance to him, or his constituents, all trouble could have been avoided. I ask gentlemen, North and South, if they will not unite in settling these abstract questions, and give peace to the country ?